

# This Is Literary Idol!



The competition is hot.  
Be sure to vote for your favorite.

By Bryon Cahill  
Illustrations by Sarah Beetson

## CHARACTERS

(main characters in **boldface**)

**Narrators 1, 2, 3**

**Chuck Bookends**, *the host*

Rebecca Standhope, *a judge*

Mikael Crovers, *a judge*

Bronson Parody, *a judge*

**Emily Dickinson**, *a contestant*

**Langston Hughes**, *a contestant*

**Mark Twain**, *a contestant*

**Edgar Allan Poe**, *a contestant*

**William Shakespeare**, *a contestant*

Deep-voiced man

**Editor's note:** For best results, we recommend that the students taking the roles of the contestants review their lines in advance.

## SCENE 1

**Narrator 1:** The scene is set. Not a sound can be heard inside the dark theater. A nervous contestant coughs in the wings.

**Narrator 2:** Over the heads of an eager audience, a voice comes from the loudspeakers.

**Chuck Bookends:** We're down to our final five. Who will be the champion? It all gets decided tonight. This is *Literary Idol!*

**Narrator 3:** Brilliant white lights dazzle around the theater. The audience jumps up and applauds wildly. Loud, energetic music causes many to dance in the aisles.

**Narr 1:** The stage lights shine on the host, Chuck Bookends, as he does a slow jog to center.

**Bookends:** Hello, and welcome to the championship round of *Literary Idol*. In the past 67 weeks, America has stepped up and voted for its favorite writers, one of whom is British! But we'll get to that in a moment. First, let's welcome our judges.

**Narr 2:** A panel of three judges sits in front of the stage.

**Bookends:** First, we have the lovely and talented president of Dynamite Publishing, Rebecca Standhope.

**Narr 3:** Rebecca Standhope stands up, smiles, and waves to the audience.

**Rebecca Standhope:** Thank you, thank you, I love you all so much!

**Bookends:** Next up is the famed writer of the popular young-adult horror series *Dragon's Feast*. Give it up for Mikael Crovers.

**Narr 1:** Mikael Crovers turns in his seat to face the audience.

**Mikael Crovers:** Yeah, yeah. What's up, my lizards?

**Bookends:** And last but certainly not least is the ever-humble creator of *Literary Idol*, Mr. Bronson Parody!

**Narr 2:** Bronson Parody does not stand or turn. He smiles **nonchalantly** as the crowd hoots and hollers for him. A few boos also **emanate** from the audience.

**Bronson Parody:** Yes, that's quite enough now.

**Narr 3:** Bookends waits for the noise to die down and then continues.

**Bookends:** Last week, *you* voted and we said a sad good-bye to Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, Geoffrey Chaucer, Lewis Carroll, J. K. Rowling, and Robert Louis Stevenson. Mikael, do you think America made the right choice?

**Crovers:** Oh, don't even get me started on J. K.! That lizard inspires me daily! America definitely did wrong by her. And she was our only living contestant!

**Parody:** Listen, they are all very talented in their own right. But that's just the nature of the competition. Not everyone can win, you know. Personally, I think America got it wrong by voting off Charles Dickens. That piece he read us about the three ghosts and that scrooge of a man was quite a masterpiece.

**Crovers:** Right on, right on.

**Standhope:** I know. And the poor boy with the crutch ... what was his name?

**Bookends:** Tiny Tim.

**Standhope:** Tiny Tim, right. That character really pulled on my heartstrings, you know?

**Crovers:** I feel you, lizard. I feel you.

**Bookends:** And what about the others?

**Crovers:** Actually, I was surprised that America didn't take to that Carroll dude. His "Jabberwocky" poem was crazy **stellar!**

**Parody:** Stop it. It was all gibberish. What was that about slithy toves and borogoves? I couldn't understand a word of it.

**Standhope:** Oh, you're awful, Bronson. Open your mind a little, sheesh!

**Parody:** And then that Robert Louis Stevenson guy ... Writing about pirates? Who cares? Pirates are so 2007.

**Bookends:** Tell that to Johnny Depp!

**Parody:** Oh, is there another *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie coming out? I need to see that like I need to take a pilgrimage to Canterbury. I was glad to see Geoffrey Chaucer booted out.

**Standhope:** Is there anything you don't hate, Bronson?

**Parody:** Well, Rebecca, if you were listening, I did mention that I was moved by Dickens's work.

**Crovers:** That's only because you can relate to Ebenezer.

### \* vocab

**NONCHALANTLY:** indifferently

**EMANATE:** to flow out from

**STELLAR:** excellent, outstanding

**Parody:** Bah. Humbug. I also enjoyed Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. I was surprised she didn't make the cut.

**Crovers:** Yeah, her Victorian characters were righteous! Though it would have been better if they were hunting zombies.

**Standhope:** Zombies! You're crazy. Not everyone can write horrific novels, my friend.

**Crovers:** You mean *horror* novels, Rebecca.

**Standhope:** I stand uncorrected.

**Narr 1:** The audience laughs and applauds Standhope. A man in the balcony whistles loudly through his fingers.

**Bookends:** All right now. Let's all take it easy. We've got a great show for you tonight—let's get it on!

## SCENE 2

**Bookends:** Our five remaining writers are eagerly waiting to perform. So let's bring them out now!

**Narr 2:** Bookends makes a grand sweeping gesture with his arm, and from stage right, William Shakespeare and Langston Hughes walk out. From stage left, Mark Twain and Edgar Allan Poe enter.

**Narr 3:** A giant projector screen comes down at center stage to show a desk and an empty chair amid an otherwise empty room. The audience snickers and gasps.

**Bookends:** And please welcome Emily Dickinson. As you know, Miss Dickinson comes to us every week via satellite feed from her home in Amherst,

Massachusetts, as she is unable, or unwilling, to leave her house. How **eccentric!** Hello, Miss Dickinson?

**Narr 1:** The faint voice of a woman is now heard.

**Emily Dickinson:** I'm nobody! Who are you? Are you nobody, too? Then there's a pair of us—don't tell!

They'd banish us, you know.

**Bookends:** Hello? Hello, Miss Dickinson, are you there?

**Narr 2:** On the projector screen, a small, waifish, pale-faced but pretty young lady appears. She walks into the room and sits down at her desk, folding her hands in her lap. The audience applauds.

**Dickinson:** Yes, hello. I am here. I was just ... I had heard a fly buzz, and I was whispering to it.

**Bookends:** Marvelous. Let's get started, shall we? Gentlemen, if you will take a seat here on these stools, we will provide you with the items you requested before the show.

**Narr 3:** Shakespeare, Poe, Twain, and Hughes all take a seat on stools that have been brought out on the stage. Stagehands bring out four desks and place one in front of each man. As the writers settle in, their personal items are brought out as well. They watch the screen along with Bookends and the audience.

### \* vocab

**ECCENTRIC:** unusual or peculiar

**REVERES:** appreciates with awe

**TOUSLED:** disheveled

**Bookends:** Wow us with what you've got, Ms. Dickinson!

**Narr 1:** She clears her throat and then begins.

**Dickinson:** Hope is the thing with feathers  
That perches in the soul,  
And sings the tune without the words,  
And never stops at all,  
And sweetest in the gale is heard;  
And sore must be the storm  
That could abash the little bird  
That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chilliest land,  
And on the strangest sea;  
Yet, never, in extremity,  
It asked a crumb of me.

**Narr 2:** The audience **reverses** her with silence. Then applause.

**Bookends:** Haunting.

**Dickinson:** Thank you. I mailed that poem to a friend once. She thoroughly enjoyed it.

**Bookends:** We can certainly see why! Judges, what do you think?

**Parody:** What I admire about you, Emily, is that you manage to be so profound and worldly without ever leaving your house.

**Dickinson:** Some keep the Sabbath going to church; I keep it staying at home.

**Standhope:** That's lovely, honey. Just lovely. I just keep coming

back to that little bird. It's so brave to be fighting against the storm.

**Crovers:** You move me, my lizard.

**Dickinson:** Yes, hope is quite an inspirational thing. Now, if you will excuse me, my sister, Lavinia, is calling. We are going to have some soothing tea and gentle conversation.

**Bookends:** Ladies and gentlemen, how about another round of applause for Emily Dickinson?

**Narr 3:** The audience applauds her as she steps away from the desk and disappears off the screen.

**Bookends:** Well, gentlemen,

that's going to be quite a hard act to follow.

**Narr 1:** The projection screen suddenly changes to show close-ups of each literary icon. They are all, each in his own way, absorbed in the creative process.

**Narr 2:** William Shakespeare is writing with a feathery quill. Mark Twain is rolling two billiard balls around and around in the palm of his hand, concentrating fully. His old-fashioned typewriter sits before him.

**Narr 3:** Edgar Allan Poe is feeding a cracker to a calm and eerie raven. He taps a pencil thoughtfully on his **tousled** black hair. Langston Hughes is bopping





back and forth to a jazz rhythm in his head and tapping his hands and feet against his desk.

**Bookends:** Well, it appears Mr. Hughes is rarin' to go. Tell the people what you're dreaming of, Langston.

**Langston Hughes:**

To fling my arms wide  
In some place of the sun,  
To whirl and to dance  
Till the white day is done.  
Then rest at cool evening  
Beneath a tall tree  
While night comes on gently,  
Dark like me—  
That is my dream!

To fling my arms wide  
In the face of the sun,  
Dance! Whirl! Whirl!  
Till the quick day is done.  
Rest at pale evening . . .  
A tall, slim tree . . .

Night coming tenderly  
Black like me.

**Bookends:** That's some dream! I guess you're quite the night owl, aren't you?

**Hughes:** Thank you. I suppose you could say that.

**Standhope:** I just love the gorgeous imagery. And the rhythm!

**Hughes:** My poems are meant to be read aloud, crooned, shouted, and sung.

**Standhope:** Yes, and you crooned that one just beautifully. Excellent work.

**Crovers:** But I must add that the metaphor is very moving. You present a powerful message about racial inequality there, don't you? And about the dignity of your race.

**Hughes:** I'm glad you are able to hear that.

**Parody:** Sorry to say that this didn't quite do it for me.

**Narr 1:** The audience boos Parody with gusto.

**Parody:** Now hold on, let me finish. I guess I just never understood repetition in poetry. What's the point of the second stanza? You changed a few words of the first stanza . . . big deal. I find it to be lazy writing.

**Crovers:** Wow, lizard. Wow. You really don't get it, do you?

**Standhope:** There's nothing lazy about it! Repetition is a time-honored convention of poetry. It adds emphasis to what the poet is saying. But in this case, Mr. Hughes makes a subtle shift in the tone of the message. The first stanza is about his dream. The second is about his reality.

**Parody:** Oh, pish.

**Standhope:** No, listen. The reality of the narrator's life during the day is quite harsh, isn't it? There's a message about oppression there, I suspect. Only night brings him any relief. It's very subtle, but it's also very powerful. I say bravo, Langston. Bravo!

**Narr 2:** The audience agrees and applauds for Hughes.

**Parody:** I am not a big fan of subtlety.

**Bookends:** No, you wouldn't be, would you, Bronson?

**Crovers:** OK, OK. Let's hear something else.

**Hughes:** This one is a personal favorite.

What happens to a dream  
deferred?

Does it dry up

like a raisin in the sun?  
Or fester like a sore—  
And then run?  
Does it stink like rotten meat?  
Or crust and sugar over—  
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags  
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

**Bookends:** Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Langston Hughes!

**Narr 3:** The audience delivers rapid-fire applause, and Hughes heads back to his desk to write.

**Narr 1:** Twain is busy type-type-typing away on his typewriter. His fingers move like lightning. *Click-click-click-ding! Click-click-clickety-click-ding!* He slams the carriage right and continues writing line by line.

**Bookends:** Well, it looks as if Mr. Twain is quite involved with that relic!

**Narr 2:** Twain stops his writing, looks up, smiles slyly behind his long white mustache, and stands, walking toward Bookends at center stage.

**Mark Twain:** Why, if you are calling my manner of writing a relic, you are addressing me as one as well, sir. For my words and my person are one and the same.

**Bookends:** I didn't mean to say ...

**Twain:** I will have you know that in my time, I was the first important writer to present a publisher with a typewritten manuscript. That manuscript was *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, and I tell you no lie when I say it was a smashing success!

**Bookends:** I know it well.

**Twain:** Good, good. You are a well-read gentleman, no doubt.

And you know that a person who *won't* read has no advantage over one who *can't* read. You do know that, don't you?

**Narr 3:** Bookends looks to the judges for help.

**Parody:** You dug your own grave with this one, Chuck. Ha! Good luck battling wits with that seasoned wordsmith!

**Narr 1:** The audience laughs.

**Twain:** Do you hear that, Mr. Bookends? Against the assault of laughter, nothing can stand.

**Narr 2:** Twain allows himself a hearty laugh.

**Bookends:** Mr. Twain, if I may, arguably your two most famous novels have been *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. What do you think draws so many readers to those stories of boyhood?

**Twain:** I conceive that the right way to write a story for boys is to write so that it will not only interest boys but strongly interest any man who has ever been a boy. That immensely enlarges the audience.

**Bookends:** Ha! ... Funny.

**Narr 3:** The host's nervous outburst gives Twain pause.

**Twain:** Yes, humor is mankind's greatest blessing. If I may, I would like to read an excerpt from an essay I wrote on the subtle differences between humor and comedy.

**Bookends:** Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Mark Twain!

**Narr 1:** The audience applauds as Twain strides toward center stage to deliver his reading.

**Twain:** The humorous story may



be spun out to great length, and may wander around as much as it pleases, and arrive nowhere in particular; but the comic and witty stories must be brief and end with a point. The humorous story bubbles gently along, the others burst.

The humorous story is strictly a work of art—high and delicate art—and only an artist can tell it; but no art is necessary in telling the comic and the witty story; anybody can do it. . . . Even you, Bookends.

**Narr 2:** The audience hoots with delight.

**Twain:** The humorous story is told gravely; the teller does his

best to conceal the fact that he even dimly suspects that there is anything funny about it; but the teller of the comic story tells you beforehand that it is one of the funniest things he has ever heard, then tells it with eager delight, and is the first person to laugh when he gets through. And sometimes, if he has had good success, he is so glad and happy that he will repeat the “nub” of it and glance around from face to face, collecting applause, and then repeat it again. It is

**\* vocab**

**RELIC:** an object surviving from an earlier time

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a pathetic thing to see. ... I'm sure you are familiar with that, Bookends.

**Narr 3:** Bookends smiles. He knows better than to match wits with Twain again.

**Twain:** Very often, of course, the rambling and disjointed humorous story finishes with a nub, point, snapper, or whatever you like to call it. Then the listener must be alert, for in many cases the teller will divert attention from that nub by dropping it in a carefully casual and indifferent way, with the pretence that he does not know it is a nub. ...

But the teller of the comic story does not slur the nub; he shouts it at you—every time. And when he prints it ... he italicizes it, puts some whooping exclamation-points after it, and sometimes explains it in a parenthesis. All of which is very depressing, and makes one want to **renounce** joking and lead a better life.

**Narr 1:** The audience is stunned. They don't know whether to laugh or cheer or remain silent.

**Bookends:** Oh, are you finished? I was waiting for the nub.

**Narr 2:** Crovers suddenly begins to howl with laughter. He holds his chest and doubles over in his chair.

**Narr 3:** The audience relaxes and laughs along. Everyone in the theater, save for Parody, enjoys a hearty laugh for a full minute.

**Crovers:** Wait—hold up, lizards, hold up. That was brilliant! Wow! Who would ever think to give that much thought to humor?

**Standhope:** Yeah ... I laughed a lot. But I didn't really get it.

**Parody:** That's because it was not funny, my dear.

**Standhope:** What?

**Parody:** The speech he delivered was **authentic**, but it wasn't funny. It was brilliant, but it wasn't anything to laugh out loud over. In effect, Mr. Twain, your speech insightfully points a finger at the overacting storytellers of the world. For that it *is* funny. And I will happily laugh along. Ha.

**Narr 1:** Twain winks at Parody.

**Twain:** At least one person gets the joke. Apparently there is nothing that cannot happen today!

**Narr 2:** Twain makes his way offstage. As he passes Bookends, the host makes an effort to look the other way.

**Bookends:** All right, well that was ... peculiar.

**Narr 3:** Poe stands and pushes his chair back from his desk.

**Edgar Allan Poe:** Do you want to hear peculiar?

**Bookends:** By all means! Right after a word from our sponsor.

### SCENE 3

**Narr 1:** The lights in the theater go down, and a commercial starts to play on the giant screen. The image is a close-up of a pretty woman sitting in a beach chair. She is wearing dark sunglasses and a big, floppy sun hat. She is reading a paperback book.

**Narr 2:** The camera pulls back to show more books at her feet. The camera zooms out even more to show that all around the woman

are books, books, books. The beach is scattered with them.

**Narr 3:** The waves roll in, bringing more literature to her feet.

**Narr 1:** The woman finishes reading the book in her hands. Smiling, satisfied, she closes it, puts it down, and picks up another one. Once again, she starts to read.

**Narr 2:** A man's deep voice speaks as the commercial comes to an end.

**Deep-voiced man:** Reading. Get swept away.

### SCENE 4

**Narr 3:** The commercial fades to black, and the lights come up on Bookends on the stage.

**Bookends:** Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the master of **macabre**, Edgar Allan Poe!

**Narr 1:** Poe walks to center stage. His raven sits peacefully atop his shoulder as he recites his poem.

**Poe:** I call this poem "Dreams."

**Narr 2:** Poe takes in a long, dramatic breath. When he exhales, he shouts out the first word of his poem. In fact, he recites the whole first half of the poem loudly and forcefully. Then, as it carries on to the end, he settles down, almost as if he were going to sleep.

**Poe:**  
Oh! that my young life were a  
lasting dream!  
My spirit not awakening, till the  
beam  
Of an Eternity should bring the  
morrow.  
Yes! tho' that long dream were  
of hopeless sorrow,

'Twere better than the cold  
reality  
Of waking life, to him whose  
heart must be,  
And hath been still, upon the  
lovely earth,  
A chaos of deep passion, from  
his birth.  
But should it be—that dream  
eternally  
Continuing—as dreams have  
been to me  
In my young boyhood—should it  
thus be given,  
'Twere folly still to hope for  
higher Heaven. ...

**Crovers:** Cool.

**Poe:**

'Twas once—and only once—  
and the wild hour  
From my remembrance shall  
not pass—some power  
Or spell had bound me—'twas  
the chilly wind  
Came o'er me in the night,  
and left behind  
Its image on my spirit—or the  
moon  
Shone on my slumbers in her  
lofty noon  
Too coldly—or the stars—  
howe'er it was  
That dream was as that night-  
wind—let it pass.

**Crovers:** You're throwing too many emotions at me, lizard!

**Poe:**

I have been happy, tho' in a  
dream.

#### \* vocab

**RENOUNCE:** to give up by formal declaration

**AUTHENTIC:** genuine, real

**MACABRE:** gruesome, horrifying

**SEMBLANCE:** the slightest appearance or trace

I have been happy—and I  
love the theme:  
Dreams! in their vivid coloring  
of life,  
As in that fleeting, shadowy,  
misty strife  
Of **semblance** with reality,  
which brings  
To the delirious eye, more  
lovely things  
Of Paradise and Love—and  
all our own!  
Than young Hope in his  
sunniest hour hath known.

**Narr 3:** Once again, the audience is stunned into silence. But this time, they do not laugh. They do not even smile. Shock sweeps

across their faces.

**Bookends:** Tonight's show has certainly taken a turn into the bizarre, hasn't it?

**Narr 1:** Some members of the audience laugh nervously.

**Bookends:** Tell us, sir, what does that poem mean to you?

**Poe:** For me, poetry has not been a purpose, but a passion. I would define, in brief, the poetry of words as the rhythmical creation of beauty.

**Crovers:** You, sir, are the original lizard! But I think Chuck was asking you what that particular poem means to you.





**Standhope:** I know what it means to me. It makes me feel all snuggly and cozy and ready for bedtime. I love it.

**Parody:** Pipe down, will you, Rebecca. This isn't your dream at all. Mr. Poe?

**Poe:** It is a commentary on dreams themselves, Mr. Bookends. Quite an odd name you have, by the way. Regardless, my poem is about the **fickleness** of dreams. How often do you dream of one dream in one moment and then find yourself whisked away in your mind to a new, wandering dream in the next? I have tried to capture the various emotions that I myself have felt

while dreaming and dreaming and dreaming on. I am just fascinated by how everything we see and seem is but a dream within a dream. Wouldn't you agree?

**Narr 2:** Bookends looks sheepishly at Poe, as if the writer might grow fangs and gnaw the host's head off.

**Bookends:** If I agree with you, can we move on?

**Poe:** I believe that would be all right.

**Bookends:** Ladies and gentlemen, please give a round of applause to Mr. Edgar Allan Poe!

**Narr 3:** They do. And as the lanky, dark-dressed man walks

off the stage, his raven hears him mumbling.

**Poe:** I wish I could write as mysterious as a cat.

**Narr 1:** The judges all look at the last remaining writer. Bookends approaches the man, who has not ceased moving his quill over his parchment this entire time.

**Bookends:** And now for our oldest contestant! Mr. Shakespeare? May I say you are looking quite splendid for someone who is 447 years old.

**Narr 2:** Shakespeare looks up from his writing and smiles.

**William Shakespeare:** Cakes and ale, my friend. Cakes and ale.

**Bookends:** How are you enjoying your time here at *Literary Idol*?

**Shakespeare:** Though this be madness, there is method in it.

**Bookends:** Please, enlighten us, Mr. Shakespeare. Come and take center stage.

**Narr 3:** Shakespeare heads to center. A spotlight beams on him and makes him glow.

**Shakespeare:**  
All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women  
merely players;  
They have their exits and their  
entrances,  
And one man in his time plays  
many parts,  
His acts being seven ages.

**Narr 1:** Bookends nervously looks at his watch.

**Bookends:** I'm sorry, but it looks as if we are quickly running out of time. Can you maybe just, like, skip over the first five ages?

**Shakespeare:**  
The sixth age shifts  
Into the lean and slippered  
pantaloon,  
With spectacles on nose and  
pouch on side;  
His youthful hose, well saved, a  
world too wide  
For his shrunk shank, and his big  
manly voice,  
Turning again toward childish  
treble, pipes  
And whistles in his sound. Last  
scene of all,  
That ends this strange eventful  
history,  
Is second childishness and mere  
oblivion,  
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste,  
sans everything.

**Narr 2:** Shakespeare bows. The audience politely applauds.

**Bookends:** Wait, I'm confused. Why do you have so much sand in your teeth and eyes and everything?

**Crovers:** Not *sands*, you lizard! *Sans*! It means "without."

**Parody:** I thoroughly enjoyed that, Will. It certainly wasn't the happiest piece of writing you've shared with us, but it really outlines a human life so **succinctly**!

**Standhope:** Tell us more about the stage, while we've got you front and center on it.

**Shakespeare:**  
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and  
to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from  
day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded  
time;

And all our yesterdays have  
lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out,  
brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a  
poor player,  
That struts and frets his hour  
upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more. It is  
a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound  
and fury,  
Signifying nothing.

**Standhope:** Sheesh! Sorry I asked. So much **melancholy**! It's

#### \* vocab

**FICKLENESS:** being susceptible to change

**SUCCINCTLY:** briefly, in few words

**MELANCHOLY:** a gloomy state of mind, sadness

going to my head! Can't you give us something sweet?

**Narr 3:** At this moment, the *Literary Idol* band starts to play, signaling that the show is drawing to an end.

**Shakespeare:** (*looking straight at Standhope*) If music be the food of love, play on.

**Narr 1:** Standhope swoons and slumps forward in her chair. The audience gasps. Shakespeare grins.

**Shakespeare:** Still got it!

**Bookends:** Well, Will, it looks as if we're out of time.

**Shakespeare:** (*gesturing dramatically*) Parting is such sweet sorrow. A thousand times good night.

**Narr 2:** Crovers wakes Standhope by gently nudging her.

**Crovers:** Wake up, my lizard! Wake up!

**Narr 3:** The music swells, the rejuvenated audience roars with excitement, Standhope blows kisses to the crowd, Shakespeare walks off the stage, and Bookends delivers his final message.

**Bookends:** There you have it, America. It's in your hands now. Who will be the next *Literary Idol*? Will it be Emily Dickinson, Langston Hughes, Mark Twain, Edgar Allan Poe, or William Shakespeare? ■

#### Have Your Say!

The play doesn't have to end here. Cast your vote now at [www.weeklyreader.com/idol](http://www.weeklyreader.com/idol). Who knows what new literary secrets you might discover there!

